



John L. Cattelan
Executive Director, Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs
H.B. 5303, AAC CHILDHOOD OBESITY
Committee on Children
March 2, 2016

Senator Bartolomeo, Representative Urban and members of the Children Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is John Cattelan and I am here today on behalf of the Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs. The Alliance represents 22 YMCAs across the state of Connecticut. I'm here today to urge the members of this committee to support H.B. 5303, An Act Concerning Childhood Obesity.

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs is keenly aware of the staggering rates of childhood obesity rates in Connecticut. This issue impacts a child's long-term health and performance in the classroom. It can also have a lifelong psychological effect on a child.

The direct measurement of height and weight in an Every Smile Counts Obesity Survey from 2012 revealed that almost one-third (31.7%) of Connecticut students

in kindergarten and 3rd grade are overweight or obese.

Dr. Rebeca London from Stanford University stated it's been established that there's a link between students' obesity or physical fitness and academic achievement.

According to a 2015 research study that was published in Pediatric Obesity, children who are overweight or obese are frequently victimized by peers and being overweight is one of the most prevalent reasons for peer harassment reported by youth. We are all aware regarding the long term impact of bullying.

According to the Connecticut Department of Health, overweight children and adolescents are at risk for many serious physical, social and mental health problems – both during their youth and as adults.

We would like to suggest two changes to the bill just for clarification.

We believe the bill should state in Section 1,(2)(b) non-dairy beverages with added sweeteners.

And, that Section4,(a)(2) should clarify that recess and physical education class are acceptable to meet the proposed 20 consecutive minutes of physical activity.

The Connecticut Alliance of YMCAs understands the need to develop more comprehensive anti-obesity strategies that go beyond simply imposing a ban on certain beverages and requiring exercise, but this is a start in the right direction. We believe it's very clear that if we want our children to become productive adults in our society, we must continue to address the childhood obesity epidemic.